

Central Regional Advisory Panel
Ft. Pierre District Office
January 28, 2015

Attendees:

Panel members Present (8):

Jack Broome - Burke
Fred Hubbard – Miller
Herb McClellan – Mobridge
Danielle McGee-Campbell – Onida
Lyle Perman – Lowry
Leonard Spomer – Pierre
Kevin Swenson – Chamberlain
Bill Waeckerle - Akaska

GF&P Staff:

Cliff Stone
Sandi Knippling
Cindy Longmire
Arden Petersen
Andy Lindbloom
Mike Smith
Nathan Baker

Welcome & Introductions

Cliff Stone opened the meeting at 10:00 am, welcomed the panel members, introduced Department Staff, and reviewed the agenda. Agenda updates, Arden Petersen, the new Assistant Director for the Wildlife Division will be here later to discuss the current legislative session and Nathan Baker will be here to update the group on mule deer survival study.

Panel Member Updates/Issues

Herb McClellan: Annual Mobridge ice fishing tournament was held. The event started 14 years ago with 100 teams and now has 525 teams, with still more people wanting to get in. Anglers from all across the country participate. So now this year there were 525 teams and had 400 applications for 25 openings. Tournament has just about out grown the facilities in Mobridge to hold the rules meeting/prize drawings. Fishing success was also good at this year's event. Pheasant numbers seemed to have improved in the Mobridge area this past fall versus the previous year. Recent warm weather has deteriorated the ice condition in the area, one vehicle recently went through.

Fred Hubbard: Overall ice fishing has been slow on the Miller area lakes, a few walleye, with an occasional nice fish and small perch are being taken. Pheasant numbers appear similar to last year, down considerably from where they have been in the past. Deer population in Hand County is in good shape, with a fair number of quality bucks harvested this past fall. Speculates that the past year's mild winter and an increase in the number of soybean acres being planted, may be attributing to the increase in quality deer numbers. One of two moose that have been in the local area for six or seven years was hit by a vehicle.

Danielle McGee: Pheasants still plentiful in the Onida area. Seems like a lot of older deer were harvested this fall, will be interested to see what next fall provides. The local Youth Outdoor Day is August 1 and sign up begins in February. There will be up to eighty kids in the 10 and older group and forty kids in the under 10 age group.

Bill Waeckerle: Ice fishing in the Akaska area has been good, with some large walleye being caught. Anglers report catching healthy fish, with smelt and various other bait fish in their diet. Fishing should be good this spring. Pheasant numbers were up, while the deer population was down this past fall. Recent kids fishing tournament had 114 kids registered with lots of prizes given away.

Lyle Perman: Pheasant hunting was improved over the previous season. Winter set in early and hunting was tougher over the Thanksgiving Holiday. However, the cold didn't stop many of the hunters at his place. Deer population is down, but hunters still had fair success.

Kevin Swenson: Overall, fishing was tough in the Chamberlain area last fall, not sure why. An early storm reduced the duck hunting opportunity this past season. Pheasants and deer numbers seem ok. Ice fishing was fair, but ice conditions have been poor, recently scheduled local ice fishing tournament was cancelled due to open water. Fish being caught are in healthy condition. Coyote contest had 63 teams and they took 20-30 coyotes, largest was 41 lbs.

Jack Broome: In Gregory County reports are that pheasant numbers rebounded considerably from the previous fall. Deer numbers, both mule deer and whitetail also seem to be increasing. Also, more Hungarian partridge locally, than have been seen for many years. Fishing around the Platte-Winner bridge area is spotty. They've been running a lot of water. Access is pretty prohibitive. Whetstone Bay is all open. A few nice perch being caught on area lakes. If we don't have a disease outbreak or bad winter things should be in good shape heading into spring.

Panel members were interested in the increased numbers of partridge and what the reasons for the increase might be. Nathan Baker indicated that partridge used to be more common in the eastern part of the state where small grains were grown. Not sure what might be attributing to the recent increase in numbers in Gregory County. Panel members also commented that grouse numbers also seemed to have increased this fall. Nathan reported that there was a much better young-to-old bird ratio on wings aged from harvested birds on the Ft. Pierre National Grasslands this past fall.

Leonard Spomer: Like others have reported, pheasant numbers in the Pierre area definitely improved. In the west and east river areas that he hunted deer numbers, were down, however did see some nice mule deer west river. Waterfowl hunting has been spotty in the area. The recently held Youth Goose Hunt was a good success. Generally, an overall improvement in wildlife numbers from a year ago. Not a lot of good fishing reports from the local Pierre area, some fair ice fishing success on ponds on the Ft. Pierre National Grasslands.

Sully County Mule Deer Study – Nathan Baker

Nathan Baker gave an overview of the mule deer survival project. The project will move to western Sully County this year, in and around the Little Bend Recreation area. Sully County was chosen because it's East River, the Any Deer tags, which allow the harvest of a mule deer, are in high demand, and there is a large area of public land available to hunt. Study will focus on determining doe/fawn survival rates. A helicopter crew will be in the area in late February. Goal is to capture 50 does. Biologists will take blood to see to determine if the doe is pregnant and ultrasound will be utilized to determine the number of fetus(s).

Questions/comments/discussion from panel members:

- Concern over the number of mule deer being harvested including those by archery, especially at the Little Bend area.
- Archer's tend to have to hunt, much more "slob hunting" observed during the rifle season.
- Discussion on deer movement

- Consider limits on number of mule deer that can be harvest.

What Happened to Swan Lake? - Lyle Perman

Lyle gave an informative presentation focusing on research looking at how land use changes in and around the Swan Lake drainage in Walworth County has changed the lake and impacted the hay land on Swan Creek that his family owns. Conversion of native prairie to cropland increases water runoff, soil infiltration rates, and water quality. Lyle has observed a change in the plant community of his hay land over the years and the frequency that he can hay the land has been reduced due to increasing number of years that the land is too wet to hay.

Deer Season Structure Survey – Cindy Longmire

Cindy presented the results of a survey of South Dakota deer hunters. The survey asked deer hunters their opinions and preferences on potential changes/modification to the current system of allocating deer licenses/tags across the various season types (ER Deer, WR Deer, Archery Deer, etc.) currently in place. Of the various options presented in the survey, only adding additional levels of preference in the drawing sequence had majority support.

Questions/comments/discussion from panel members:

- Questions and discussion on the preference point system. There was some confusion that perhaps people could purchase multiple preference points for a single season in one year, however it was explained that is not the case.
- Discussion on landowner on your own land tags versus landowner preference. If successful in the drawing landowner preference allows the license holder to hunt the entire unit. How much property a landowner has to own to qualify and if that land can be in separate parcels.
- Discussion on how the big game drawing sequence works in regards to landowner preference and preference points. Comments on how much preference points cost in neighboring States.
- Questions on success of big game hunters: rifle versus archery.
- Observation on the growing commercialization of archery hunting.
- Questions on if there were any severe disease outbreaks in deer this past year. Nothing severe as previous years was observed.
- Question on whether coyotes were an issue with deer fawn survival.

Legislative/Misc/Updates – Arden Peterson

Arden provided an overview of the current SD Legislative session and briefed the panel on the bills that the Department has an interest in. Panel had some discussion regarding the bill dealing with trespass.

Elk Management Plan Overview – Andy Lindbloom/Leonard Spomer

Andy provided an overview of the draft South Dakota Elk management plan. Leonard Spomer represented the Central RAP panel on the Elk Working Group that helped lay the ground work for much of the plan. The Elk Management plan contains information on the history of elk/elk management in South Dakota, a summary of past research and management efforts, background/summary information on the data and strategies used to develop the elk management goal.

Questions/comments/discussion from panel members:

- Question on the movement of elk in and out of Wind Cave National Park.
- Question on the plan to transplant bighorn sheep into the Deadwood area.

- After completion of the elk management plan, a deer management planning effort will begin. Maybe an opportunity for RAP panel members to participate.

Aquatic Invasive Species Update/Boat-water transport rule – Mike Smith

Mike provided the panel an update on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in South Dakota and an update on the discovery of Quagga Mussel veligers in Angostura Reservoir and a single adult Zebra Mussel in Lewis and Clark Lake. Mike also shared with the panel potential rule changes that will be considered for finalization at the March GFP Commission meeting, to prevent further spread of AIS.

Questions/comments/discussion from panel members:

- Questions on whether mussels can be eradicated are they still causing issues in other areas where they became established, how long do they stay attached?
- Panel members, who had been fishing in mussel infested waters provided comments and observations on their experiences and noted that it is common to see people from SD fishing in places like Lake Erie.
- Questions and discussion on methods to disinfect boats/trailers. Hot water (140 degrees), from a power washer, is the best tool.
- Further discussion on the proposed rule changes requiring drain plugs to be removed, when would the rules go into effect, how the proposed rules compare to those already in place in surrounding states. Panel members are encouraged to voice their opinions on the proposed rules. Mike noted that an email is going to be sent to those who had a fishing license in the past five years asking for their opinions on the proposed rules.

Next Meeting: Panel suggestion is to meet in June in Mobridge.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM